



May 2013

NEWSLETTER FOR THE PAID & VOLUNTEER STAFF OF RAILTOWN 1897 STATE HISTORIC PARK

Upcoming Events

**May 7**

Railtown Ladies Luncheon @ Covers Apple Ranch. Call Marge at 533-4595 for information

**May 11**

National Train Day Celebration at Railtown

**May 12**

The No. 3 will be running for Mother's Day with entertainment and Belgian Chocolate for Mom!

**May 25, 26 & 27**

Memorial Day Trains With entertainment

**June 4**

Luncheon 11:30am  
Papa's Roost  
Railtown Ladies  
Call Marge @ 533-4595

**June 16**

The No. 3 will be running for Father's Day with entertainment and Belgian Chocolate for Dad!

**July 4,5,6,7**

Four days of excursion trains with entertainment

**July 20**

Spotlight on Railtown Rotary Club Fundraiser

**July 27**

Rods To Rails Event  
Add 4:30 pm train

**August 3**

4th Annual Singing Rails Music Festival featuring Sourdough Slim and Red Dog Ash

**The Fresno Scraper—Ancestor to The Bulldozer**

**James Porteous** is best known for his role in the development and marketing of the Fresno Scraper. After developing and patenting several dirt-scrapers himself, he would purchase the rights to two additional scrapers, one patented by William Deidrick, and one patented by Abijah McCall and Frank Dusy. Porteous would combine the elements of these two scrapers with his own improvements and begin manufacturing the Fresno Scraper.

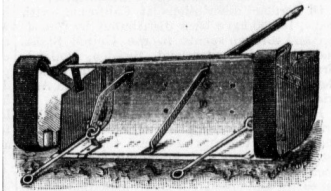
This implement would play a vital role in the land-leveling, ditch-digging and road construction of the San Joaquin Valley and go on to be marketed throughout the world.

The Fresno Scraper was used during WWI on the European front, and was used in the construction of the Panama Canal (completed in 1913). Eventually, the bulldozer would bring the use of the Fresno Scraper to an end.

In 1877 we find Mr. Porteous, a Scot immigrant selling wagons in Fresno, California. He became an American citizen in 1899 and was very much involved in the farm life of the Fresno valley. Water and irrigation were the highest priority for valley farmers, which meant much canal digging.

His invention was considered one of the most important ..... (continue next page)

W. H. DEIDRICK'S  
Excavator & Land Leveler.



I am now manufacturing the above Excavator and Land Leveler, which has been tested and proved to be the most complete that has yet been in use. It is my own invention, and Patent applied for. I make them any size to suit our trade. Our regular sizes are four, five and six feet long, adapted for two or four horses. One man and four horses can do the work of three dump scrapers, thus saving the labor of two men and two horses. It is made adjustable to all kinds of land or work. My prices are: For six feet, \$45; five feet, \$42.50; four feet, \$40. For particulars apply to

**W. H. DEIDRICK,**  
Selma, Fresno County, Cal.

and ORDERS PROMPTLY ATTENDED TO.

1883 Advertisement



Close-up showing construction with wheeled scrapers in 1897 above the Hetch Hetchy Junction below Red Hills (photo courtesy of the Stein Collection CSRM)

.....agricultural and civil engineering machines ever made. It's unique design scooped up the dirt as it was pulled along. Riding on runners, the operator could change the angle as he passed over low spots, smoothing out the terrain. He could vary the angle of attack to match the soil. Between 1884 and 1910 thousands of Fresno scrapers were produced at the Fresno Agricultural Works which had been formed by Porteous, and used in agriculture and land leveling, as well as road and railroad grading and the construction industry. Both wheeled scrapers and drag scrapers were used in the building of the railroad grade from Oakdale to Jamestown by the Sierra Railway. Visitors can currently view two Fresno scrapers on display at Railtown across from the master mechanics office.

(Source info: [www.Farmcollector.com](http://www.Farmcollector.com), [www.uh.edu/engine](http://www.uh.edu/engine) and Wikipedia)



Historical photo of a farmer with a four horse team and Fresno scraper

## Railtown Myth Busters

*Have you heard an interesting tale around the park that stretched credulity? Have you ever wondered if that exciting tidbit you use on your tour or heard from someone else is REALLY true? In this column, we'll consider some of these stories, their origins, and truths. If you have your own question, (or have researched something you think would be interesting to all) please email or snail mail it in!*

**Truth or not?** Standard gauge railroad tracks are the same width as roman chariots, which was basically influenced by the hind end of two horses side by side? Well, the answer is a wee bit more complicated. Sure, it's easy to say the rails were developed in England. Then say, before the rails there were wagon roads. And then say the wheel spacing was influenced by the width of the roads, which go back to ancient Rome when they had chariot tracks leaving deep ruts in the dirt roads. But, think again! It's a myth! Museum curator Kyle Wyatt sent us the following information: There were LOTS of different track gauges used on various coal railroads around Britain in the 19th century. George Stephenson happened to work in an area where 4' 8 1/2" was the common gauge—and he successfully pushed that gauge to be adopted as standard for British railways. Contrary to the myth, there is no historical or practical support for the idea that Roman chariots (or their reputed ruts) had anything whatsoever to do with establishing track gauge. In the United States, Congress made this gauge "official" in 1863 for the Transcontinental Railroad. Our early railroads prior to the Civil War initially didn't have a standard gauge either. Some of the common gauges found other than 4' 8 1/2", were 6', 5' and 5'6". The first locomotive reputed to operate in the U.S. was the Stourbridge Lion of the Delaware & Hudson Canal Company in 1929 which was 4' 3" gauge. For more, see <http://www.snopes.com/history/american/gauge.asp> or go to <http://www.straightdope.com/columns/read/2538/was-standard-railroad-gauge-48-determined-by-roman-chariots-ruts>

### **Turntable Article Index**

We have published a lot of interesting and informative articles in our monthly Turntable over the last several years. Here in a handy reference index with the issue dates and subjects. You can access all of our past issues on line at our volunteer web site: <http://railtown.team.parks.ca.gov/volunteers> or request a hard copy from the editor.

#### **February 2009**

Hidden Treasure On Gus' Special (by Dave Tadlock)

Depot Difficulty—Union Democrat September 19, 1903 (by Craig Konklin)

#### **April 2009**

Back Track—Railtown In History—A Runaway Train on the Sierra Railway Track Kills Two Women (by Craig Konklin)

Heisler Number 9—Was It a Jinxed Locomotive? (by Dave Tadlock)

#### **May 2009**

Back Track—Railtown In History—Sierra Railway Property Burned (by Craig Konklin)

#### **June 2009**

Interesting Items—From The Narrow Gauge Website (by Tom Bispo)

#### **July 2009**

Back Backtrack—Railtown in History—Fire Destroys Nevills Hotel (by ?)

#### **October 2009**

Ghosts In The Roundhouse (by Dave Rainwater)

#### **March 2010**

Preserving The Best of The Past for the Future (by Lisa DeLacy/Curator)

#### **July 2010**

A Trip Through History on the Virginia & Truckee Railway (by Ken Vogel)

#### **August 2010**

Train History Inspires Songs and American Folklore (submitted by Dave Rainwater)

#### **October 2010**

Interpreting Railtown To a Wide and Varied Audience (submitted by Kim Baker)

#### **November 2010**

Do You Have A Great Idea? Checklist to help get your idea off the ground (by Kim Baker)

#### **May 2011**

Memoirs of An Old Time "Door Slammer" (excerpted from SP Pages, [www.wx4.org](http://www.wx4.org))

#### **June 2011**

The Shay Mystique

#### **July 2011**

Velocipede Hand-Cars (by Kim Baker)

The Pelton Water Wheel (by Dave Connery)

#### **August 2011**

The Yosemite Short Line Railway & Race For Tourism (by Joe Sparagna)

#### **September 2011**

Branches of The Sierra Railway—Part 1 (by Dave Connery)

#### **October 2011**

Branches of The Sierra—Part 2 (by Dave Connery)

The Tri-Dam Project (by Kyle Wyatt)

#### **November 2011**

A Little Known Bit of Railroad History (by Dave Connery)

#### **February 2012**

14 Characteristics of A Good Tour Guide (by Dave Rainwater)



(index continued)

**March 2012**

Railtown's Side Dump Car Collection (by Kyle Wyatt)

**April 2012**

The Sierra Railroad's Angel Branch (by Dave Connery)

Hostling or Bringing the Locomotive to Life (by Dave Tadlock)

**May 2012**

"All The Bells & Whistles...." (by Dave Connery)

**June 2012**

Up-Date on "Bells & Whistles (by Dave Connery)

Jeanette Rogers Talks About The No. 8 Caboose

**July 2012**

Interpreting The No. 34 Cab (by Dave Tadlock)

**August 2012**

The Fireman's Side of The Cab (by Dave Tadlock)

**September 2012**

Passenger Service on The Sierra Railway (by Dave Connery)

**October 2012**

The Iconic Jamestown Water Tank—Fact & Fable (by Kyle Wyatt and Kim Baker)

**November 2012**

Petticoat Junction (reprint from 'The Movie Railroads' by Larry Jensen)

**March 2013**

Warren C. Potts—A Parallel of Thomas Bullock (by Lisa DeLacy)

**April 2013**

For The Sierra Railroad, some construction has been 'Dam' good! (by Dave Connery)



The Stylish  
Hostler



How much fun could  
varnishing be?



Party  
Anyone?



Multi-tasking !



Chair lift instruction  
With Dave and Lisa



Train Talkin'



Railtown booth at  
Murphy's Irish Days



Fire Patrol class with Anthony LaNotte



Telling The Railtown Story 'graduation' class of 2013





## Railtown News

### The Home & Garden Show & Murphy's Irish Days

We want to thank all the volunteers who staffed our booths at these two recent events, greeting guests and distributing membership information. Thanks to Jerry & Anna Lewis, Jeanette Foster, Joyce Presley, Allan Nordstrom, Laverne Coon, Tom & Candis Hull, Michelle Aartman and Dan Maher! Presenting our booth at these and other upcoming events really help promote our State Park and Railtown memberships. Future upcoming events are the Patterson Apricot Fiesta June 1 & 2, the Father's Day Fly-In on June 15 & 16, the Jamestown Heritage Festival (October), and Rods To Rails on Saturday July 27. If you'd like to volunteer for any of these, we have am and pm shifts available.

### Hot Weather and Water

Just a reminder to bring plenty of water as the weather gets hotter. We recommend bringing your recyclable water bottles. (and by the way, Jamestown water is great to drink!). We are showing a coalition with other state parks advocating eco friendly responsibility for recycling and protecting the environment.

### Brakeman's Academy

Michael Bispo and Alex Sharp are holding a Brakeman's Academy during the month of May. Study guides and instructional outlines will be provided. The dates for attendance are: Saturday, May 4, Sunday, May 5, Sunday, May 12, Sunday, May 19, Friday, May 24 and Friday, May 31. Email Michael if interested at : ranchboy28@yahoo.com



District Superintendent  
Dana Jones w/ Kim



Rose



Jeannie

Railtown Ladies looking good!



Candis



Allan in serious Green !



Winter at Railtown February 19  
Photo by Craig Peterson



The Ring of Fire



Al and Lisa's Blacksmith & Belt Shop Class



**PO Box 1250**

**Jamestown, CA 95327**

**Return Service Requested**

**TO:**



**Depot Store-** (209) 984-3953

**Volunteer Desk-** (209) 984-4408

**Volunteer Website-** <http://railtown.team.parks.ca.gov/volunteers>

**Railtown Blog-** [www.railtown1897.wordpress.com](http://www.railtown1897.wordpress.com)

**Crew Caboose-** (209) 984-0352



### **Railtown Paid and Volunteer Staff Contact Information**

*Send newsletter submissions to the editor: [Dave.Rainwater@parks.ca.gov](mailto:Dave.Rainwater@parks.ca.gov)  
(all area codes are 209)*

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*Newsletter Available in Alternative Format on Request*